[Carta a Mr. Gordon McIntosh]

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13 March 1985

Dear Mr. McIntosh,

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I wish to thank you for your cable and letter of 11 February relating to the question of East Timor.

As you are aware, resolution 37/30, to which you referred, was rejected by Indonesia. The Secretary-General has, nonetheless, been able to initiate an exercise of good offices aimed at facilitating the search for a comprehensive settlement of the problem.

Last year, he submitted a progress report to the General Assembly. Acting upon a recommendation of its General Committee, the General Assembly decided, without objection, to defer consideration of the question of East Timor to the following session. This decision, however, did not deprive Member States of the possibility of expressing their views on the problem during the Assembly's general debate. Twelve countries did, in fact, refer to it and all of those who mentioned the Secretary-General's involvement expressed support for his actions and encouraged him to continue his efforts towards a comprehensive solution.

In accordance with established practice, the question of East Timor has been included in the provisional agenda of the 1985 session of the General Assembly. It is true that the General Assembly decided at its last two sessions to defer consideration of the question and may well do so again. However, the decision to debate or defer consideration of a particular item does not fall within the Secretary-General's purview and can only be taken by the Assembly

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itself, which is master of its own procedure. It is in that context that the BBC news report to which you referred must be understood.

In his progress report to the Assembly, the Secretary-General outlined, as far as is possible in a public document, the initial results of his efforts as of July 1984. Since then, the process of consultation has continued and he will again report to the General Assembly in due course. However, you will surely understand that, if this exercise is to have a reasonable chance for success, the Secretary-General cannot publicize the various steps and initiatives which have been taken or which may be contemplated in the course of the negotiating process.

At this stage, I wish to assure you, on behalf of the Secretary-General, that the concerns expressed in your letter have been carefully noted and will be very much borne in mind, as the process unfolds. Your continuing interest in this complex situation and your kind words of support for the United Nations' endeavours to contribute to a comprehensive settlement are also most appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Rafeeuddin Ahmed
Under-Secretary-General